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Pakistani-American Workers to Share \$1.11 Million in Harassment Settlement with Stockton Steel

Muslim Employees Ridiculed While Engaging In Prayer Obligations, EEOC Suit Says

San Francisco - The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) today announced the \$1.11 million settlement of an employment discrimination lawsuit under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 against Stockton Steel, a subsidiary of Herrick Corporation. The Consent Decree resolves an EEOC lawsuit filed in federal district court in January 2000, charging that Pakistani-American employees were repeatedly harassed due to their national origin and Muslim religion at Herrick's steel plant in Stockton, California. The workers alleged harassment that included being ridiculed during their daily Muslim prayer obligations and derogatory name-calling such as "camel jockey" and "raghead."

Through an interpreter, former machine operator and charging party Abdul Rehman said: "I felt that we were humiliated and given the worst assignments simply because of where we were born and our religious beliefs. But we are Americans and, with the assistance of the EEOC, I have found that the American laws [against discrimination] protect us too."

Under the terms of the Consent Decree signed today by U.S. District Judge Morrison C. England, Jr., Stockton Steel denies all charges but has agreed to

resolve the lawsuit (EEOC v. The Herrick Corporation, d/b/a Stockton Steel, CIV S 00-0102 MCE DAD). The company will pay monetary damages totaling \$1,110,000 to four former employees. The company has also agreed to make policy changes, conduct training to prevent future discrimination, and to implement a policy guaranteeing an employee's right to request an accommodation for religious needs.

EEOC District Director Susan McDuffie stated, "The EEOC is particularly pleased with Stockton Steel's willingness to review their existing policies and to make improvements as needed. When employers institute training programs and maintain clear anti-discrimination policies, everybody wins."

EEOC Regional Attorney William R. Tamayo said, "This is a fair settlement that allows the former employees to move on with their lives and ensures current and future employees a work environment free of harassment and accommodating of sincere religious beliefs. Religion and national origin are two of the fastest growing types of discrimination charges filed nationally with the EEOC. We urge employers to take prompt and corrective action to prevent such discrimination."

Tamayo noted that in Fiscal Year 2002, charges filed with the EEOC nationwide alleging religious discrimination increased 21% over the previous year, and national origin discrimination complaints increased by 13%.

EEOC enforces Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act; sections of the Civil Rights Act of 1991; the Equal Pay Act; and Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The San Francisco District's jurisdiction includes Northern and Central California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Wake Island and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. For further information about EEOC, please visit the agency's web site at www.eeoc.gov.

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